MR. KAPITZ: My name is John Kapitz. I represent Northern States Power Company in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The first thing I'd like to do is commend the Department of Energy for actually getting the draft Environmental Impact Statement out. That's an important milestone as part of our mission to safely dispose of our nation's spent fuel and high-level waste. And the fact it's out here for us all to debate, whether you agreed with the document or don't agree with the document, I think it's a milestone we should all note and appreciate the fact that we have this document to debate now. That is a real positive step forward.

Northern States Power is obviously very

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interested in the whole Department of Energy spent fuel management program. In Minnesota, nuclear power provides 30 percent of our customers' electricity. Our customers have contributed nearly $300 million to nuclear waste disposal funds with the expectation that the Department of Energy would have begun accepting fuel in January 1998.

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While we are happy to have the Environmental Impact Statement out to debate, actually it's been a long time coming, and we do appreciate it being there.

Besides the $300 million that we paid to the waste fund, our customers also spending approximately $45 million for an on-site storage facility that we've had to build due to the fact that the Department of Energy has been unable to meet the deadline in the law.

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Currently, the State of Minnesota has restrictions on the use of that storage facility. We only have enough storage space that will allow our clients to run to the year 2007. If there isn't another place, if we aren't able to start moving our waste off site by 2007, we'll be required to shut down our facility. Estimates on the environmental impact on the State of Minnesota for the removal of that facility

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are up to $1 billion. That's why it's very, very important to the State of Minnesota, and we're anxious to help DOE move forward with their program.

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As far as a couple of comments on the Environmental Impact Statement, the draft EIS concludes that a central repository is safer than leaving the waste at the 72 existing commercial sites, which is the other option, No Action alternative. We think this is obviously a common-sense conclusion.

We support the conclusion that it's much better to manage and more efficient to manage all the spent fuel from the commercial facilities at one particular site than to leave it at the 72 existing sites. This really coincides with worldwide consensus that a centralized geologic disposal is the best method of disposal of our spent fuel.

I was here earlier in the day and there was a lot of discussions about how Yucca Mountain was chosen insinuating it was strictly a political decision. Yucca Mountain was chosen for consideration, I think if my memory is right, the USGS was the one that initially suggested this, along with several other sites. There's a lot of reasons why Yucca Mountain was initially selected for study as a repository. It has a lot of features that are beneficial to help make that a

safe facility.

To date I think the federal government has spent several billion dollars or $2 billion studying the mountain itself. The draft EIS and also the recent viability assessment that have been published all suggest that was a wise choice. Everything to date has shown that the Yucca Mountain site will be able to meet all the radiological requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The technology to date has no show-stoppers. At this point Yucca Mountain continues to look like an excellent choice, and we support that conclusion of the Environmental Impact Statement.

The other particular area I'd like to address is transportation. I understand there's a lot of interest in transportation because that does impact more people than a specific repository at one protection site.

At Northern States Power we have quite a bit of experience in transportation of spent fuel. In the mid 1980s we shipped over 1,000 assemblies from our Monticello plant to a facility in Illinois. Those assemblies all went through three different states, went through the central downtown of Minneapolis and

St. Paul.

They were all done safely with no incidents through the use of the really conservatively designed, very robust containers along with careful route planning, excellent cooperation of various government agencies and communities along the way. The shipments were all totally successful. We really had very low concerns. By the time we were all through everyone was very satisfied with the safety of that.

It was a very successful campaign. I believe that's one of the largest, if not the largest commercial campaign of shipping spent fuel in the United States.

Of all the elements of the whole repository and the whole transportation system, I think transportation is the one area that is not based on experiments, not based on trying to predict. It's probably the most proven element of the entire process.

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Throughout the world, transportation of spent fuel is done virtually on a daily basis by ocean, by ship, by truck, by rail. As a matter of fact, there was a shipment of spent fuel, foreign research fuel that came from Colombia that actually traveled by air to the port in Colombia, went by ship to the United States, went by rail from the port of entry to the

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Savannah River Lab. That one particular shipment went through air shipment, ship, and rail transport. That's probably the most proven thing.

I think as mentioned earlier, I think the 1 in 10 million that you're using for accidents seems extremely, extremely conservative. And I think that draft Environmental Impact Statement greatly over-estimates potential impact for transportation.

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In conclusion, I guess a lot of comments -- not tonight, but more so earlier -- really dealt with this as if it was a referendum on nuclear power, which it is not. High-level waste exists and must be dealt with in a safe and conscientious manner. We have to do this and deal with the waste that's out there. Stopping the repository does nothing to deal with the waste.

I don't think the DOE in any way is rushing into this. Earlier today there was a lot of people concerned about rushing into this. If I remember right, we started the program in Congress in 1982. The earliest now the Department of Energy thinks it could accept fuel at Yucca Mountain is 2013. I don't think that meets anybody's definition of a rush project. In fact, it's one of the longest running federal projects in the history of the United States.

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5 continued I don't think there's any basis to say this is rushing. I think they have proceeded in a definitely very cautious and deliberate manner.

3 continued In conclusion, as I've said, several billion dollars has already been spent to study Yucca Mountain. To date, nothing has come out to suggest this would not be an excellent place to store high-level waste and spent nuclear fuel. In general, we support the EIS findings, and encourage the DOE to move forward.